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ABSTRACT

While rhetorical theory has long been concerned with the epistemological foundations of rhetorical abilities, the full potential of the structuralist perspective is far from realized. The study of speech acts and inventive processes discloses the underlying logic of linguistic performance. A speech act is conceptualized in terms of the communicative force of discourse; examples include questions, commands, statements, promises, and compliments, as well as the more complex multiple-force and subtle forms. Speech act analysis provides insight into the ways communicators create and comprehend pragmatic strategies. The logic of conversational structure mirrors a speaker's rhetorical or communicative competence. The focus on epistemological questions concerning rhetorical invention should help to explain why communication usually works effectively, and should suggest profitable programs for preventing misunderstanding based on the effectiveness of these normal processes. Rhetorical theory should align itself more closely with structural forms of the analysis of creativity as represented in the works of Piaget, Chomsky, and Levi-Strauss. (DF)

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A MOTIVE OF RHETORICS: INVENTION AND SPEECH ACTS

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In her analysis of Kenneth Burke's contribution to the study of rhetoric, Marie Hochmuth Nichols (1952:135) observed that Burke found a wide range of meanings associated with rhetoric both in ancient and recent times. She stated, 'then he comes upon the concept of rhetoric as 'persuasion'; the nature of rhetoric as 'addressed' to an audience for a particular purpose; rhetoric as the art of 'proving opposites'; rhetoric as an appeal to "emotions and prejudices"; rhetoric as "demonstration"; rhetoric as the verbal "counterpart" of dialectic; rhetoric in the Marxian sense of persuasion "grounded in dialectic." Undoubtedly there are other ways of defining rhetoric that Burke did not uncover in his one hundred and thirty-one page review of the traditional principles of rhetoric. The question of drawing grounds and dimensions for a study of rhetoric and the problem of specifying the relationships between rhetoric and other modes of inquiry, are perennial concerns to scholars of rhetorical phenomena. Such concern, in part, can be accounted for by the importance of that process in establishing the motive (justification) of rhetorical inquiry as an academic endeavor. It is important also in establishing guidelines for

the pursuit of goals related to that endeavor. In Burke's early work, Permanence and Change (1935), he demonstrates that motives of individual actions are grounded, to some extent, in the norms and values of society. In analyzing characteristic features of systems of rhetoric, Ehninger (1968) has shown that the motives put forward for the study of rhetoric are grounded, to some extent, in the social and intellectual mileu of the periods in which they arise.

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the development of conceptualizations of rhetoric. Instead, the process of formulating such conceptualizations must be seen itself as a rhetorical process which influences and is influenced by the intellectual mileu existing in the temporal frame of such conceptualizations. In the past two decades, the intellectual mileu has taken some dramatic turns as structuralist approaches to the study of human behavior have had explosive impact in linguistics, cognitive psychology and, to some extent, anthropology. Rumblings of this eruption certainly have been felt in the realms of rhetorical inquiry. Yet, the full promise of the structuralist movement

remains to be realized.

In this paper it will be argued that in his early work Kenneth Burke adopted an "oversocialized" view of the motives of rhetorical man, while, in later writings, Burke increasingly recognized the interaction between man and his environment. However, Burke's later work was constrained greatly by his focus on rhetorical skill and literary genius. The analysis of more basic communicative acts, frequently referred to as speech act analysis, provides a more logical point from which to gain epistemelogical insight into the inventive capabilities of rhetorical actors. Thus, while Burke sought to provide a 'rhetoric of motives,' this paper centers on one particular 'motive of rhetorics'. The shortcomings of Burke's view of rhetorical man suggest a different direction for rhetorical theory than Burke himself envisioned. Beyond Burke's inciteful conceptualizations, a new rhetoric may emerge which acquires its impetus from the meager but potentially promising beginnings of speech act investigation.

Turning back the pages of Permanence and Change (1935:30-53), we find that Burke sees the ascription

of motives to actions as a social phenomenon rather than an internal, individual state of affairs. Burke writes that man is 'not only conditioned as to what he should or should not do, but also as regards to the reasons for his acts' (p. 33). Continually drawing parallels between one's Knowledge of his motives and one's Knowledge of his language, Burke proclaims 'to discover in oneself the motives accepted by one's group is much the same thing as to use the language of one's group' (p. 33). To Burke motives, like language, are social elements which structure thought. Indeed, in Burke's perspective, motives are rooted in language. He writes, 'But the question of motives brings us to the subject of communication, since motives are distinctly linguistic products. We discern situational patterns by means of the cultural group in which we are born. Our minds, as linguistic products, are composed of concepts (verbally molded) which select certain relationships as meaningful.' (p. 33). Thus, Burke's view of language, in a particular sense, follows closely from the views of Carnap, Terski, Whorf, Langer and others who exercised a great deal of influence on the subject--until recent

years. Language structures thought, in Burke's view, and it also structures motives.

The basic difficulty with Burke's account here is that he ties his view of motives to an antiquated view of language. Evidence from several areas of scholarly investigation (i.e. studies of blind and deaf mute subjects, attempts to speed up the acquisition of cognitive competence through language learning, cross-cultural studies of perception and cognition, direct attempts to test the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, studies of aphasics who have lost the ability to use language and studies of creative conceptualization) indicates that man's language is rooted in cognition. As anthropologist John Gumperz has argued, language is important for communication and information processing but it does not determine thought.

The problem here is not so much that Burke draw a faulty causal link between language and motives. His emphasis on motives as the products of social circumstance is overstated in the same way that the thought/language relationship was misanalyzed by Burke's contemporaries.

In presenting his view of motives, Burke

apparently reacted to another oversimplified view, a view portrayed by psychoanalysts which suggested that man's true motives primarily are embedded in deep interior drives. Burke argued that when psychoanalysts describe motives they are merely conforming to the vocabularies of their social group. As a result, the psychoanalysts have no special insight into the true nature of one's motives. At this point again, Burke's reaction to the psychoanalytic position is too strong--he gives no credit at all to internal forces for the production of motives.

In an article entitled, 'The Oversocialized conception of Man in Modern Sociology' Dennis Wrong (1961) grappled with a problem which seems to be at the heart of Burke's difficulties in Permanence and Change. Wrong argues that modern sociology places too much emphasis on man's apparent conformity with cultural norms and values. This tendency creates an oversimplified view of man. Wrong writes:

> All of the great nineteenth century and early twentieth century sociologists

> saw it as their major tasks to expose the unreality of such abstractions as economic man, the gain-seeker of the classical economists; political man; the power seeker of the Machiavellian tradition in political science; self-preserving man, the security-seeker of Hobbes and Darwin; sexual or libidinal man, the pleasure-seeker of doctrinnaire Freudianism; and even religious-man, the God-seeker of theologians. It would be ironical if it should turn out that they have merely contributed to yet another reified abstraction in socialized man, the status seeker of contemporary sociologists (p. 183).'

Wrong points out that in order to explain how man becomes tractable to social controls, contemporary social theorists have argued that 'man internalizes social norms and seeks a favorable self-image by conforming to the expectations of others' (p. 190). According to Wrong, such an explanation is overgeneralized and oversimplified. He argues that such a model of man denies the

possibility of man being anything more than a thoroughly socialized being. Yet we know there are internal forces which resist and alter socialization processes. Wrong suggests, for example, that the whole concept of power implies that man acts not only to conform with his fellows but also that he sometimes attempts to create conformity with his desires.

Of course, Burke's work is more complex than the preceding discussion of Permanence and Change indicates. In his later works (1952, 1955) Burke identifies the relationship between man and environment as interdependent and interactive. Burke takes the position that man is free to make choices (Cf. Schwartz, 1966) and capable of creatively influencing his environment. Burke's new rhetoric broadened the parameters of rhetorical inquiry and, as one move through Burke's writings he finds great works of literature, politics, religion, and history examined. Burke's concern with the drama of social life and the forms of culture was a precursor to Goffman's dramaturgical perspective in sociology (Cf. Goffman, 1959), just

as it influenced Duncan's symbolic interactionism (Cf. Duncan, 1962) and Edelmen's perspective on political symbolism (Edelmen, 1964).

But while Burke ultimately took on an "interactive" perspective of the relationship between men and his environment, many of the scholars he influenced (like Goffman and Edelman) adopted what must be classified as an 'oversocialized' stance. If the oversocialized view is rejected, and if we take the position that creative conceptualization is involved in the process of motive construction, we must reappraise the pillers of contemporary rhetorical theories. Writers like Capella (1972) and Scott (1977) have argued effectively that the concept of intention is crucial in rhetorical inquiry. To suggest that intentions are not completely determined by ones environment, suggests that at least some element of creativity underlies the foundations of rhetorical actions. But man's intentions are intimately and inseperably linked to men's actions or potential actions. One cannot, for example, intend to dig his way to China if he knows that he cannot carry out that action. One might intend to do something and fail but the notion of

intention at least involves a vision of the act being carried out. In order to create such a vision and thereby to formulate an intentional action, an actor must have some comprehension of pragmatics. To be a competent rhetorical actor he must have some comprehension of the workings of rhetorical discourse. The focus on man as an intentional actor must lead therefore to an examination of man's abilities to create and comprehend the pragmatics of rhetorical action.

This view of rhetoric is not far removed from Fisher's 'motive view of communication.' Fisher writes that his perspective 'directs attention not to communicator intent so much as to how in what ways rhetorical discourse functions, the nature of its uses in adapting ideas to audiences and audiences to ideas' (1970: 139). The motive of rhetorics which I propose also focuses on the functions of rhetorical discourse, but it seeks to turn the analysis of such functions around so as to gain insight into the inventive capabilities of a rhetorical actor. Such a view suggests that the concept of invention needs to be reconceived and reinvigorated. Instead of considering invention as

the means by which speakers prepare and arrange speeches, rhetorical theorists should view invention as comprising the methods by which speakers and hearers produce understanding in a complex environment.

Of course, concern with creativity is not new in rhetorical inquiry but in the past such concern has lead rhetoricians to maintain a focus on great works of rhetorical skill and literary genius. Although Burke's new rhetoric broadened the expanse of rhetorical inquiry, it did not change the level of rhetorical analysis greatly. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the analysis of more ubiquitous communicative abilities is likely to provide greater insight into the epistemological foundations of rhetorical action.

Adam Müller (Cf. Bormann and Leinfellner, 1978), a nineteenth century German rhetorician was perhaps the earliest to focus on basic communication phenomena and the perspective which he took is enlightening. Influenced strongly by the Hegelian doctrine of polarities which dominated the intellectual climate in Germany in his time, Müller saw the study of basic communication processes as revealing

great insight into more extraordinary communicative acts such as those which might be fulfilled by a skillful orator. Mullers' perspective is suggestive of the view advanced here: if there is a working logic which underlies rhetorical discourse, it makes sense to attempt to unveil that logic in its most basic and elementary forms.

Such a conceptual approach to rhetoric might manifest itself in tangible rhetorical situations, if those situations are analyzed according to units of analysis which philosophers (Cf. Searle,) have termed speech acts. A speech act is conceptualized in terms of the communicative force of discourse. Some examples of elementary speech acts include questions, greetings, commands, statements, promises and compliments. More complex forms of speech acts might involve cases where multiple force is embedded in the discourse (as in a rhetorical question which takes the form of a question but functions as a statement) or in cases where the action to be performed is less clearly defined, more subtle, and spread out more loosely over the conversation. Recent work in the investigation of speech acts suggests the importance of this perspective for

rhetorical inquiry.

Consider for example, a recent investigation which took the compliment as a unit of analysis (Turner and Edgely: 1974). The authors interviewed people about compliments which they received. They found that while compliments are ostensibly positive acts, sixty percent of the subjects in the study reported feeling uneasy about the compliments they received. This is not too surprising but the authors went further to delineate six reasons why people feel suspicious or uneasy about compliments. The reasons include:

1. They felt obligation to return a compliment.
2. Modesty - they felt need to neutralize a compliment to avoid coming off as conceited.
3. Suspicion that hidden motives lay behind the compliment.
4. An apprehension that giving a compliment was a prelude to criticism ("You did a good job but. . .")
5. Evaluation by a judge--compliments may serve to remind us of our place in a social heirarchy or they may serve to establish our positions in that hierarchy. The person who

gives a compliment assumes that he is able to judge the person who receives the compliments. This puts the compliment giver in the role of the judge which can often signify that he is placing himself in a higher role than the person who receives the compliment.

6. Praise often establishes benchmarks for future behavior. . .'Keep up the good work' can mean that future actions should be at least as good as the complimented performance.

These reasons provide insight not only into the functions of compliments, but also into the ways in which communicators create and comprehend pragmatic strategies. At face value, the compliment appears to be a rather straight forward communicative action. However, to use compliments effectively and to comprehend them properly requires much more knowledge about the functions of the speech acts in conversational contents embedded in social settings. Moreover, there is evidence that speakers perform analyses of the relative merits of different types

of speech acts given different intentions and different situations. E. E. Jones (1965), for example, has found that people tend to use strategies other than that of flattery (or complimenting) when they want to get others to like them. This indicates that people may well recognize the comparative deficiencies of compliments as devices of ingratiation. Schneider (1975) found strong relationships among intention, situation and message strategies of communicators and Schneider and Bradac (1978) have demonstrated strong links between communication situations and strategies of topic management in ongoing conversation. Sanders (1978) has demonstrated that discourse embodied in everyday conversations can only be understood if people utilize speech acts in accordance with certain principles of conversational organization.

In another empirical examination of speech acts, Mishler (1975) examined the use of questions in adult-child interactions. In his study conducted in a first grade classroom, Mishler found that questions can function as power devices. Through discourse analysis of taped conversations, Misler found that adults use questions to maintain control of both the

topic of conversation and the conversation itself. Bowers, Elliott, and Desmond (1977) have attempted to map the pragmatic logic underlying the use of devious messages, much as Nofsinger (1976) has attempted to explicate rules underlying indirect answers to questions.

What is noteworthy about the works just cited is that both empirical and analytic methods have been used with some success in beginning to tap inherent logics which manifest themselves in conversations. If one takes Chomskian linguistics as a model for this endeavor (Cf. Sanders, 1973; Sanders and Martin, 1975; Sanders, 1978; and Schneider, 1978), it might be said that the logic of conversational structure mirrors a speakers rhetorical or communicative competence. Competence here refers to more than just performance. As the concept is used in linguistics it refers to an inherent underlying logical structure which makes performance possible.

Implications of the "motive of rhetorics" proposed in this paper are important. First, the focus on epistemological questions concerning rhetorical invention should help to explain how it is that

communication works effectively much of the time. While there are conceptual ambiguities in the speech act approach, beginning with this foundation provides us with at least a common language and common focus. It may well be that profitable programs for preventing misunderstanding can be achieved once the effectiveness of normal communication processes is better understood.

Another implication of the microanalytic focus on rhetorical creativity is that rhetoric will need to align itself more closely with structural forms of analysis and other areas of inquiry which focus on mens creativity. Piaget's analysis of the development of cognition, Chemsky's analysis of the nature of language, and Levi-Strauss' analysis of the structure of myths are examples of the kinds of investigations that contemporary rhetorical theory needs to be concerned with peripherally if not directly. These aspects of contemporary thought are naturally allies of rhetoric, since all view man as an intentional being and creative actor.

Scholars who have studied men's creativity at microanalytic levels in other spheres have much to contribute to rhetorical theory. For example,

Albert Einstein's pronouncements on creative conceptualizations has important implications for the thought/language question, an issue of significance to contemporary rhetorical theory. In addition, the work of Simon and Newall on creative problem solving has gone far to specify men's capabilities as an information processor. One finding throughout this research confirms the claims of Aristotle, Toulmin and others that humans (and incidentally computers) have the ability to short-circuit formal logic on many different kinds of problem solving tasks.

While rhetorical theory has long been concerned with the epistemological foundations of men's rhetorical abilities, the full potential of the rhetorical perspective is far from realized. By focusing on speech acts and inventive processes, rhetorical theorists and other scholars of communicative phenomena should provide newer rhetorics, rhetorics which go beyond the work of scholars like Burke to delineate the ways by which people create and comprehend communicative acts.

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